

Sony Open in Hawaii

Tuesday, January 12, 2021

Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

Waialae Country Club

Sergio Garcia

Joaquin Niemann

Press Conference

LAURA VESCOVI: Sergio, welcome to the virtual interview room at the Sony Open in Hawaii. Last week, you guys were out at the Sentry Tournament of Champions. Joaquín had an incredible performance there, ending in a playoff ultimately won by Harris English.

And Sergio, I think everybody watching saw you on the sidelines there cheering him on. Can you talk through the emotions of what you were thinking while you were cheering him on on Sunday?

SERGIO GARCIA: Yeah, we got to play together on Sunday, which was really nice. Obviously we're good friends. And he played amazing, so I was definitely cheering him on hard on the back nine to see if he could get the victory.

But yeah, I think once you get into a playoff, it's always tricky. But I think they both played great, both Harry and Joaco, and unfortunately for Joaco, he just fell a little bit short. But like I told him, he had a great week and that's what he should take out of it.

And on my behalf, I had a decent week. We really enjoyed it together on Sunday. So it's the least I could do to stay and cheer him on a little bit. Unfortunately it didn't work out but it was good.

LAURA VESCOVI: Joaquín, can you talk us through the emotions of the playoff last week, and how great it is to have a friend like Sergio to be there with you and be cheering you on?

JOAQUÍN NIEMANN: Yeah, it was a little funny. It was the first time I think we played together in a competitive round. So, well, we have a lot of competitive rounds in practice rounds, but this one was different. Yeah, it was a lot of fun playing with Sergio. Especially like he was saying, he was cheering me on on the back nine which was amazing.



Also it was really nice to see him waiting for me. We were waiting for an hour for Harry, for him to be finished and to see if I made it to the playoff, and he was there waiting for me and cheering me on on the playoff. It was nice to see him on the side.

Yeah, it was a lot of fun, but unfortunately I was a little bit short to the victory. But yeah, it was fun.

LAURA VESCOVI: And now this week we're here at the Sony Open, and you've each played here before. But Sergio, it's been since 2003, and Joaquín you've been here one time in 2020.

Can you each just talk about your excitement to be back here in Honolulu?

SERGIO GARCIA: Yeah, I'm excited about it. I didn't know it was that long. I thought it was maybe 2006, but yeah, even longer. So there have definitely been some changes to the course from what I remember from when I played it here last. Course looks great. It's in very good shape. Much firmer than Kapalua was last week.

So you have to take that into a little bit of an account. The ball is really rolling a lot more than it did there but it's great. We actually get to play together first two rounds again, so that's going to be fun. We've gone from not playing tournament rounds together to playing three in a row. So hopefully we'll both have another good week and contend like we did last week.

JOAQUÍN NIEMANN: Yeah, my first time here was last year and I've heard that the course was a lot of fun and you've got to move the ball a lot, and it also gets really windy.

Yeah, it's a little different than what we played last week; that it was hilly and wide and now it's more narrow. We don't hit many drivers off the tee. Yeah, it's going to be fun playing with Sergio again for another two more days and hopefully be up there on the weekend.

Q. If you could update us on Rafita and kind of where everything stands with your cousin and so forth.



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JOAQUÍN NIEMANN: Yes, so I went back to Chile for two, three weeks, and I was able meet him for the first time. Just looking back on the support that I received from the TOUR, especially from México, from UNIFIN, they give away like \$100,000 to Rafita, so it was amazing to watch that. And now that we are almost there, we got like 95, 97 percent of our goal that is like 2.1 million. So I'm really happy to be helping him out and see how he's getting all the support from all the people here on the PGA TOUR.

Q. Can you talk to the fact that Sergio is acting like sort of a mentor? It's an interesting scenario playing a final round, last nine holes and have someone of his calibre sort of almost be right there in your back pocket, even though he's still in the competition himself, sort of cheering you on. What's it like to have someone of his stature in your corner?

JOAQUÍN NIEMANN: For me, it's more like he's a friend, of course, and being able to play with him on the course and be able to enjoy more the round, it looked more like a friend round instead of more like a competitive round.

So it was nice to have him, especially on the back nine where I needed some motivation and needed to make some more birdies. And yeah, he was there. Obviously he was playing his own tournament, too, but he was supporting me a lot and it was a lot of fun. I would love to see one dais two play for the tournament. It would be fun.

Q. And to that point, at what point did you feel like you sort of switched over to half, okay, it might not be my week but he's got a great opportunity here and I sort of want to help him out.

SERGIO GARCIA: Well, towards the end of the front nine, I think he shot 6-under on the front and I was 1-under. So I knew that to start with, it was going to be difficult for me. I knew that I probably had to shoot at least 10-under par, something like that, to have a chance. Obviously I needed everything to go perfectly right.

So once I wasn't able to really hole out many putts on the front and only shot 1-under, I knew that I could still have a great week and finish nicely, which we did, but I knew that my chances of winning were pretty much gone. But his weren't. He was out there and he was playing well and he was rolling some good putts in here and there, and so I knew that he was going to have a chance and it was great for me to have the possibility of being there, seeing everything happen firsthand and to a friend of mine, and you know, trying to wish him or push him hard to get his second win.

So that was obviously fun and it was nice to be a part of it, and be watching and kind of cheering him on a little bit. It was very, very close, but like I said earlier, it was a great week and he's going to take all the positives from the week, which are a lot.

Q. What makes him a good friend?

SERGIO GARCIA: He's good fun. We've had a very good connection since we met each other when he played our AJGA tournament. He won it two years in a row and we met each other. Obviously then he was a lot younger and he was a lot shyer. But yeah, he's definitely loosening up. He's definitely -- we've built a good relationship.

And everybody knows that I love to have friends and make friends on TOUR, and that doesn't mean that when we're playing, I'm not trying to play well or beat him. Of course I'm trying to beat everyone, and that includes him. But I want to play better than him. I don't want him to do badly. I want him to do well. I want myself to do better. That's the way I always look at it, and you know, at the end of the day, I feel like when you stop playing golf, people start going away, and only if you've made good friends, then you have people around you.

So I think it's important, maybe it's more important to have five or six really good friends that you can make on TOUR than maybe not having them and then winning a couple extra tournaments. I would definitely take a few friends, a few good friends in my pocket before I take -- give them away for a couple tournaments.

Q. If you could run us through, what are your goals, both short and long term?

JOAQUÍN NIEMANN: Short and long term. Of course, like every golfer, I always wish to become some day No. 1 in the world. Yeah, I've got to start from little. I've got to start win tournaments and hopefully a major, too.

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